

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
P.O. Box 68
Kremmling, CO 80459**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: CO-120-2008-40-CX

PROJECT NAME: WAPA Fiber Optics

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 1 and 2 N., R. 77 through 80 W.

APPLICANT: DOE, Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: WAPA is applying for a right-of-way authorization for the Kremmling-Windy Gap 138 kV transmission line to allow for the replacement of one overhead ground wire with a fiber optic cable in order to improve communication and reliability for the electric power system. A contractor would be completing this work. The project would be implemented as follows:

- The equipment needed for the installation of the fiber optic cable would include bucket trucks, pickups, pulling trailers, and possibly a helicopter.
- Installation of the fiber optic cable would be done from locations where spool trucks are used to feed, tighten, and secure the suspended wire. These locations are known as “splice points”. These splice point locations are the most likely areas for ground disturbance to occur.
- New ground disturbance during installation of the fiber optic cable would be limited to pulling and tensioning sites along the transmission line within the existing transmission right-of-way (100-feet-wide). The area where the puller and tensioner are placed at the splice point would be about 400’ x 100’. This area would be about 200’ x 100’ on each side of the splice point structure. Fiber optic cable spool storage and handling areas would be at these splice points. Materials would be delivered to these sites by truck and offloaded. Cable would be strung between splice points using the existing overhead ground wire. The fiber optic overhead ground wire would be clipped to the structures using a helicopter or bucket truck. The number of pulling and tensioning sites would depend upon the lengths of fiber optic cable procured for installation. Fiber optic cable would be pulled from splice point to splice point, typically about every three miles.
- Construction would occur during the summer and fall of 2008.

- Access would be the same as currently used to access the Kremmling-Windy Gap transmission line. WAPA would only use existing access roads for the fiber optic installation.
- In order to ensure that no subsurface impacts would occur, rubber-tired vehicles would be utilized. The width of the affected area would be a single tract where the vehicles travel within the transmission line right-of-way. There would be a large area of traffic where the puller and tensioner would be located at the splice point locations.
- The fiber optic cable would be composed of 24-pair or 48 dielectric fibers (does not conduct electricity) encased in a metal jacket that protects the fibers and serves the purpose of the static line it replaces. The fibers and their protective coatings, including the metal jacket, create a cable approximately 0.5 inch in diameter. The cable does not emit any individual noise, or electric or magnetic fields. The fiber optic cable is attached at or near the top of each electrical transmission line structure above the electrical conductors.
- All of the old ground wire and other materials would be removed from the right-of-way by truck.
- Part of the design plan includes the attached maps and mitigation table (attachment #1) which shows any sensitive environmental areas and the mitigation WAPA would follow.
- Standard right-of-way stipulations for transmission lines and access roads are included as Attachment #2.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: II-B-12 pg.14

Decision Language: Decision Language: Provide the opportunity to utilize public lands for development of facilities which benefit the public, while considering environmental and agency concerns.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11, Number: (E) (13), “*Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary*”. None of the following extraordinary circumstances in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes	No
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety		X
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].		X
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
2.9 Violate a Federal Law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Review Completed
Susan Cassel	Realty Specialist	Lands	6/26/08
Joe Stout	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Review/Compliance	7/3/08
Paula Belcher	Hydrologist	Soil, Air Water	6/26/08
Megan McGuire	Wildlife Biologist	T&E	6/04/08
Bill Wyatt	Archaeologist	Cultural	6/11/08
Frank G. Rupp	Archaeologist	Paleontology	6/11/08
Richard Johnson	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-native species Vegetation	5/15/08

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The project is considered routine maintenance and is not considered to be a routine undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended and it's implementing regulations.

Native American Religious Concerns: The proposed action is not an undertaking and therefore tribal consultation is not necessary.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There would be no impact to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: The right-of-way would be inspected and monitored periodically to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant. The right-of-way would also be inspected after any maintenance activities to determine compliance with and effectiveness of reclamation measures.

NAME OF PREPARER: Susan Cassel

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Joe Stout

DATE: 7/3/08

ATTATCHMENTS:

- 1). Maps and Mitigation Table
- 2). Standard right-of-way Stipulations

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this CER and have decided to implement the proposed action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an extraordinary circumstance and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ Peter McFadden (acting)

DATE SIGNED: 7/3/08